

## Hobbies

# U.S. coin production drops off 20 percent

By Roger Boye

**U**nited States coin production slid more than 20 percent last year as the recession tempered demand for "hard money."

Uncle Sam churned out 13.1 billion coins in 1991, down from the 16.6 billion in 1990 and one of the lowest totals of the past decade. Last year's production equates to about \$2.50 worth of change—or 52 new coins—for each U.S. citizen.

As in the past, Lincoln cents accounted for nearly three out of every four coins minted in 1991. The government spends 77 cents to make \$1 worth of Lincolns, but some consumers put them in the trash, and a few experts say the denomination should be abolished because of its limited value and usefulness.

Up to 15 billion coins will be

made for circulation this year. Overall coin demand is influenced by the inflation rate and sale of non-durable goods, among other things.

Coin production peaked in 1982 with 19.5 billion pieces.



By late spring, commercial banks probably will begin distributing \$50 Federal Reserve notes with enhanced anti-counterfeiting devices.

Each new bill of series 1990 features microprinting around the center portrait and a polyester thread embedded into the paper, subtle changes expected to make greenbacks more difficult to duplicate accurately on color copiers. Revised \$100 bills made their debut last year and new \$20s should follow by early 1993.

The security-enhanced \$50s will replace notes already in circula-

tion as the older bills wear out. Officials will not recall or demonetize currency now in use.

Treasury printers began making the new \$50 notes several weeks ago.



Uncle Sam has sharpened the image of Abe Lincoln on 1992-dated pennies, making Abe's beard, wrinkles and coat more distinct.

Freshly minted 1992 pennies also display a clear "VDB" near the front-side rim at 7 o'clock, according to hobby newspaper Coin World. The initials of coin designer Victor David Brenner usually are blurred.

Meanwhile, Numismatic News has reported that a 1992 nickel it examined sports an ornate "2" in the date, reminiscent of 19th Century coinage.